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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the effectiveness of teacher selection practices with reference to literature sources and recommends experimentation with a structured interview approach based on life style themes. The first variable in selection involves identification of characteristics of effective teachers. Some agreement concerning particular teaching qualities is found in the literature, but varying perceptions suggest that behavioral characteristics of effective teachers are too complex for generalizations. The second variable, objective screening of candidates, includes assessments of documents, which depends on the emphasis of those conducting the screening. Some authorities emphasize references and previous work experience, whereas others favor tested minimum competencies. The interview stage, the most relied upon method, is the most diverse facet of the process. Administrators should experiment with a structured interview whereby the interviewer compares answers with those of teachers previously evaluated as effective. A project exemplifying this approach, developed in the United States and applicable to the Australian context, contains life style themes in interview questions--relationship, democratic orientation, rapport drive, empathy, student orientation, acceptance, pupil success, and work and professional orientation. Responses help employers understand a teacher's prospects for success. Follow-up evaluations of teachers would validate the use of structured interview schedules. Appendices of interview questions and a 16-item bibliography conclude this document. (CJH)

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TEACHER SELECTION - A Case for Better Interviews

Paper Presented at Third Annual Conference
of the Group for Research in Education and
Administration, University of New England,

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ABSTRACT

The changing educational scene in the eighties has created uncertainty about the effectiveness of teacher selection processes which usually comprise two distinct phases. The first is an objective screening of certification and transcript papers, credentials, letters of reference, evaluations of practice teaching or teaching experiences, and resumes. The degree of importance attached to these elements varies widely but all contribute towards identifying candidates for the second phase, namely, the interview, which is universally the most relied - upon method in the selection of personnel and is the most diverse and varied facet in the whole process of teacher selection.

There is a need to experiment with the adoption of a structured interview which uses a set of questions to which a candidate supplies answers. The interviewer then scores and compares these "listen for" answers with those given by teachers previously evaluated as effective. An example of this approach has resulted in the successful implementation of Project EMPATHY where eight life style themes based on relationship, democratic orientation, rapport, empathy, pupil orientation, acceptance, pupil success, and work and professional orientation were developed. A number of interview questions were based around these life style themes. The teacher responses during the interview helped potential employers to develop a better understanding of a teacher's prospects for success.

Such an approach could be implemented in the selection of teachers in N.S.W. schools. Follow up evaluations of these teachers could help to validate the use of highly structured interview schedules for teacher selection.

Discrepancies between supply and demand for teachers and the continuing search for effective teachers have generated interest in procedures which yield the best results in the selection of the most appropriate personnel available. Moreover, fluctuations in the supply of teachers continue to generate debate about the best way of satisfying the demand for teachers in the eighties.

Although selection procedures vary considerably, a review of recent literature and current practices identifies some patterns which consistently contribute to more desirable processes of personnel selection. An examination of these patterns produces two major variables which are an integral component of any effective process of teacher selection.

TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

The first variable involves the identification of various characteristics of effective teachers. Despite varying, and in some instances conflicting perceptions of the qualities necessary for effective teaching, some agreement can be gained from the literature to justify the assessment of certain teaching qualities during a structured interview. Brannon (19/5) believes poise, posture, facial expression and mannerisms are good indicators of how a teacher will operate in the classroom. Johnson (19/6) supports the assessment of general appearance and contends verbal skills and emotional balance form a core of characteristics of effective teachers.

Varying emphases and perceptions of teacher qualities strongly suggest that there is no firm consensus or easily discernible pattern of characteristics which when possessed by teachers, produce effective teaching. Many years of research data from teacher effectiveness studies have led to the conclusion that the behavioural characteristics of effective teachers are almost too complex for generalisations. Despite these conflicting views efforts continue to identify appropriate characteristics which will help select more efficient teachers.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

The second variable involves the objective screening of candidates. This may include an assessment of some or all of the following:

- i) proper certification,
- ii) transcript of papers,
- iii) completed application forms,
- iv) references,
- v) teaching experiences, and
- vi) resume's

The degree of emphasis attached to these documents varies widely depending on the perceptions of the person conducting the screening process. For example, Beach (1980) strongly supports scrutinising references and previous work experience, and contends the most accurate insight into how a person will perform in the future can be

gleaned by reviewing what the person has done in the past. In addition to the screening process, various forms of personnel classification tests and teacher personality inventories have been used to assist with the screening of applicants. Tocco and Elligett (1980) report on efforts to test reading comprehension and arithmetic competency of teacher applicants. They argue that minimal competency in the skills tested is essential if other necessary competencies are to reach acceptability.

The ease of administering standardised tests, together with their objectivity and the time they save can be attractive features. However, Harris (1979) suggests that these tests be employed only for gross screening, similar to poor transcripts or very poor references. Smith (1980) concurs with Harris and asserts that there is no standard test available today that can accurately measure or predict teaching performance.

Fuhr (1977) counters these arguments by advocating the screening of candidates and stressing the need for a committee to rate candidates on varying personal qualities such as initiative, compatability and personality. Furthermore, Fuhr (1977) suggests each candidate should teach a ten-minute video taped lesson which is assessed and used in the final decision for employment.

The selection of better teachers is likely to remain a contentious issue for a long time. However, the selection process will continue to incorporate two stages. The first includes the initial screening and is comprised of a careful analysis of transcripts, credentials,

references, tests and other elements. Its purpose is to gather as much information about the applicants and to identify potential candidates for the second phase which is the interview and is designed to clarify and varify the candidate's unique skills, attributes, and suitability for teaching.

THE INTERVIEW PHASE

Once the general screening has narrowed the field of applicants to a small number, the stage is set for the interview which is the most relied-upon method in the selection of personnel. Ironically, it is also the most diverse and varied facet in the whole selection process. Among the various interview modes and techniques used are the group and stress interviews, checklists and teacher perception instruments, and the structured interview mode.

Beach (1980) noted that the structured interview provides a higher inter-rater reliability than other interview forms, provides greater opportunity for interviewees to talk, covers intended material consistently and help interviewers withhold judgement until the close of the interview.

The project EMPAIHY (Emphasising More Personalised Attitudes Toward Helping Youth) teacher selection instrument was patterned after the Teacher Perceiver Interview (TPI) designed by Selection Research, Inc (SRI) and uses a well researched set of questions the answers to which are strong predictors of teacher success. These questions were the

result of an extensive research process which included responses from parents, students, principals, and community members on what they felt were highly desirable traits of teachers. Eight life style themes emerged: Relationship, Democratic Orientation, Rapport Drive, Empathy, Student Orientation, Acceptance, Student Success, and Work and Professional Orientation. Thayer (1980) reported that 125 questions were generated for the interview and were asked of 387 teachers who had been rated by their students and principals. The questions which finally made part of the interview had to meet two criteria:

- i) relate to a life style theme; and
- ii) discriminate between the teachers who were rated high by students and principals and those who were rated low.

Only 32 interview questions from the original 125 were found to meet the listed criteria. These questions and their preferred responses formed the basis of a structured interview. A further eight "ethics" type questions were included to make up a total of forty possible interview questions.

A description of the eight life style themes together with a sample of interview questions relating to each theme and appropriate responses are discussed.

The life style themes are:

1. Relationship - A teacher with a strong relationship theme has good relating skills such as listening, patience and caring. The teacher sees the building of relationships as the best way to help pupils grow and develop.

2. Democratic Orientation - A teacher with a democratic orientation works out problems with pupils and sees supervision as supportive and understanding. This person does not deal with problems in an authoritarian manner.
3. Rapport Drive - Rapport drive is a teacher's ability to develop an approving and favourable relationship with each pupil. This teacher likes pupils and in turn wants to be liked by them.
4. Empathy - The empathetic teacher puts himself in the other person's place. He/she apprehends the pupil's state of mind and "feels" with him/her.
5. Student Orientation - This involves a belief that pupils ought to be heard, understood and dealt with as people first; and such things as curriculum, materials and public image would take second place.
6. Acceptance - The teacher with this quality accepts a person "as is" and helps from that point of view. It is neither a condemn nor condone approach. It has been defined as unconditional regard.
7. Student Success - The teacher receives satisfaction from the success of pupils and sees pupil success as fulfilment of his/her goal.
8. Work and Professional Orientation - This includes work organisation, professional relationship and belief in his/her profession.

Examples of interview questions, life style themes and preferred answers are provided. The preferred answer is given a score of 1. If the answer could not be matched to a preferred response then no score is given. At the end of the interview the number of preferred answers is added to give an overall score for responses to all the question.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND APPROPRIATE RESPONSES

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Question</u>	<u>Response</u>
1.	What are the most important ways a teacher can help his/her pupils?	To understand, listen, trust, communicate with pupils OR help pupils build a positive self-image.
2.	How do you discipline your pupils?	Varies with individuals and pupils involved in making rules OR pupils are so busy, excited, that discipline is not a problem.
3.	How important is it to have your pupils like you?	It is very important. (Beware of respect type responses)
4.	One of your pupils cheats on an examination. You see it. What would you do?	Deal with pupil individually and try to understand why, avoid embarrassing the pupil. (Beware of lecturing, moralising, tearing up paper etc.)
5.	How much student involvement should there be in determining the educational programs for the school.	A great deal (Beware of rejection of participation)

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Question</u>	<u>Response</u>
	6. You have a pupil who does excellent work, but consistently comes late to class. What would you do?	Is not overly concerned with lateness. May indicate that he/she would work with pupil in a positive way to help overcome the problem. (Beware of punishment, detention etc.)
	7. Can you give an example of when a lesson has gone very well?	When pupil/s learned or developed in some way.
	8. How well organised are you?	Well - no limitations. (Beware of any mention of not being well organised)

(N.B. A complete list of all the questions is included in Appendix 1)

A well conducted interview is a vital part of the whole selection process and holds great potential for gathering useful information about the potential candidate. It provides essential information that cannot be obtained in any other way. Project EMPATHY is an excellent example of the structured interview process. It provides remedies for many of the errors associated with interviewing potential candidates such as: failure to establish rapport, failure to have a strategy, interview is too brief, incorrect interpretation, unconscious biases or preferences, excessive talking, reliance on intuition, and overemphasis on initial impression (Stanton, 1977).

The use of the EMPATHY structured interview scheme has the potential of employing the most appropriate teachers. It also enables the identification of certain deficiencies so that more effective staff development programs can be planned and implemented within the total in-service education framework. The long term effects of mediocre teaching can substantially impair pupil learning. The structured interview using the EMPATHY procedures can contribute to a high quality of pupil learning by improving the selection of teachers, facilitating in-service course developments and supervising experienced and inexperienced teachers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

The Project EMPATHY life style themes and related interview questions were developed and validated in the United States where employment of teachers takes place on school district basis rather than statewide or systemic basis. An examination of Political, Cultural, Administrative, and funding practices reveal similarities and some significant differences between Australia and the United States. Therefore, there is a need to conduct studies designed to answer the following questions.

1. Can the Project EMPATHY life style themes be used in an Australian context to identify potentially effective teachers? If not, what modifications are necessary to enable various teacher employing agencies to interview and select the most appropriate and highly effective teachers?

2. Can the Project EMPATHY strategies or any other selection strategies be successfully implemented in a highly structured political and unionized setting where future employment is seen as an expected outcome once prospective teachers graduate from any teacher education program.
3. To what extent can the results of an interview be used to predict highly effective teachers? How can the structured interview be used to admit potential candidates into existing teacher education programs?
4. What is the role of co-operating teachers, school principals, and teacher education lecturers in determining suitability for teaching and identifying highly competent student teachers? Should these highly competent teachers expect immediate employment upon graduation?
5. Is there high correlation between success in Practice Teaching and likely success in full-time teaching?
6. Is there high correlation between student teachers' and experienced teachers' responses to various interview questions?

Research undertaken to answer these and other questions can generate a variety of strategies designed to assist in the selection of highly competent teachers and consequently improve the teaching learning-process. However such research may be deemed unproductive given the political and unionised climate which exists in NSW.

The search for excellence must continue. Co-operating teachers, school principals, teacher educators, and various employing agencies must reaffirm their commitment to identify highly competent teachers and discourage incompetent teachers from entering the teaching profession.

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APPENDIX 1

EMPATHY PROJECT - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1 - What are the most important ways a teacher can help his/her pupils?

QUESTION 2 - How would you characterise an effective disciplinarian?

QUESTION 3 - How important is it to have your pupils like you?

QUESTION 4 - One of your pupils cheats on an examination. You see it. What would you do?

QUESTION 5 - How much pupil involvement should there be in determining the educational programs for the school?

QUESTION 6 - You have a pupil who does excellent work, but consistently comes late to class. What would you do?

QUESTION 7 - How can a teacher tell when he/she has had a good lesson session? Could you give an example?

QUESTION 8 - How well organised are you?

QUESTION 9 - In talking to a pupil after school, the pupil reveals some very personal experiences out of that pupil's own personal life. Since that session the pupil has not come back to talk with you, and participation in class has been very limited. How would you feel and what would you do? 17

APPENDIX 1 (cont.)

QUESTION 10 - How do you discipline your pupils?

QUESTION 11 - How much do you want people to like you?

QUESTION 12 - When you are listening to a pupil who stutters, how do you feel?

QUESTION 13 - Can pupils evaluate their teachers? Should they?

QUESTION 14 - You have just requested a pupil not to do something. He does it anyway. When you point out that he is doing just what you have asked him not to do, he says something that is so funny the class roars. What would you do?

QUESTION 15 - A teacher tells you "Failure is good for pupils - it helps them to learn." How would you respond to this statement?

QUESTION 16 - This may take some thought, but can you indicate when you first wanted to be a teacher?

QUESTION 17 - How much should a teacher know about the personal lives of his/her pupils.

QUESTION 18 - Do you involve your pupils in setting up acceptable classroom behaviour? (If "yes") how have you gone about establishing these standards?

APPENDIX 1 (cont.)

QUESTION 19 - How well do you think your pupils like you?

(If no experience) how well did your pupils like you during your student teaching?

QUESTION 20 - You are walking down the street. A young child in your class comes up to you and offers you twenty cents. What would you do?

QUESTION 21 - Do you believe pupils are capable of self-discipline?

QUESTION 22 - How well do you accept people? Please give me an example.

QUESTION 23 - A pupil who has been a rebel all year writes you a note thanking you and says he learned a lot from your class. How would you feel and why?

QUESTION 24 - You are in a teachers' meeting. The discussion doesn't seem to be relevant. You are very bored. What would you do?

QUESTION 25 - What are your strengths in working with pupils?

QUESTION 26 - A pupil is constantly talking and being disruptive when you are trying to talk to the class. How would you deal with the pupil?

APPENDIX 1 (cont.)

QUESTION 27 - Can a teacher get too close to his/her pupils.

QUESTION 28 - A pupil brings you a piece of pie that is a little worse for wear. Let's say that you don't like whatever kind of pie it is. What would you do?

QUESTION 29 - One of your pupils is still absent after five days. What would you do?

QUESTION 30 - Do you like to have pupils laugh in your classroom?

QUESTION 31 - How do you feel when a pupil fails?

QUESTION 32 - Describe a good teacher please?

QUESTION 33 - What do you do when a principal or superior criticises you for doing something you think is right?

QUESTION 34 - What to you are justifiable reasons for terminating the employment of a full-time or casual member of staff?

QUESTION 35 - You are with a group of teachers in the staffroom. One of the teachers begins to make negative remarks about the school. What would you do?

QUESTION 36 - A teacher once told us, "I always take all my sick leave time. If you don't take it, you lose it, and besides I work hard for my pay." What thoughts do you have regarding this statement?

APPENDIX 1 (cont.)

QUESTION 37 - To what extent do you intend to continue your education?

QUESTION 38 - How much time outside of the regular working day should
a teacher expect to put in? What activities would you
like to work with in the school?

QUESTION 39 - What is the status of the teaching profession? How does
the community view the importance of a teacher?

QUESTION 40 - If you could not be a teacher, what would you like to
be?

APPENDIX 2

ANALYSIS OF THIRD YEAR BACHELOR OF EDUCATION HOME ECONOMICS STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO THE EMPATHY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Twenty eight Bachelor of Education Home Economics third year students completed the 40 questions in the EMPATHY interview schedule. Appropriate items scored one. Inappropriate items scored zero. Analysis of their written responses shows the highest score was 32 and the lowest score was 15. The mean score for the group was 22.

The number of "correct" or "appropriate" group responses for each item of the interview questionnaire was as follows:

ITEM	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
SCORE	15	4	14	5	16	7	22	19
ITEM	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
SCORE	24	5	6	15	15	5	16	16
ITEM	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
SCORE	14	17	15	16	20	19	7	18
ITEM	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32
SCORE	20	6	3	7	17	21	16	19
ITEM	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
SCORE	20	21	20	21	21	24	17	18

There were 38 students in the group. However, only 28 completed the interview schedule voluntarily. Students were asked to put their names on the survey. The reasons given to the students related to possible follow up.

APPENDIX 2 (cont.)

An examination of the above figures reveals discrepancies between actual and preferred responses on the following questions and their related life style themes:

1. Questions 2, 10, 26 - Democratic Orientation
2. Questions 11, 26 - Rapport Drive
3. Questions 4, 28 - Empathy
4. Questions 6, 14 - Acceptance

These questions need further assessment, particularly in an Australian context.

The major questions arising from the data are:

- a) How do student teachers' responses compare with experienced teachers responses?
- b) How do the written responses of prospective teachers compare with responses given in a "live" interview situation?

APPENDIX 3

RESPONSES OF STUDENTS SCORING ABOVE AND BELOW AVERAGE (16 out of 28 gave an appropriate response)

Relationship Theme

(maximum score = 40)

Question 1. What are the most appropriate ways a teacher can help his/her pupils?

Student	Below Average Score	Student	Above Average Score
1. Helen	Develop self-concept and self esteem, encourage them to strive to do well. 1	Patricia	Help them to become responsible individuals, capable of making decisions and managing their lives by taking an interest in them and giving them the opportunities of exploring their own potential. 1
2. Tracey	Giving encouragement and support where needed. They need to be able to review their teaching and adapt it to the needs of the students. 0	Linda	Understanding them as individuals, listening to them when they want to be heard, being available when appropriate. 1
3. Jenny	Accept them as individuals - don't stereotype them. Support their ideas. Be sensitive to their needs. Be approachable. 1	Nicole	Ensure pupils understand that they can approach me on any matter and feel confident, comfortable and secure in doing so. 1
4. Shona	Guidance in learning. Conveying knowledge. 0	Janet	To help them realise their own worth as a person in a complex society. Help them develop into responsible thinking individuals. 1

N.B. Responses scored 1 if appropriate.

APPENDIX 4

RESPONSES OF STUDENTS SCORING ABOVE AND BELOW AVERAGE (5 out of 28 gave an appropriate response)

Empathy Theme

(maximum score = 40)

Question 4. One of your pupils cheats on an exam. You see it. What would you do?

Student	Below Average	Student	Above Average
1. Helen	Wait until the end of the exam then talk to him/her privately and help him/her to understand that he/she did was wrong. 1	Patricia	Allow the pupil to complete the exam, take him/her aside after and find out why and decide course of action re disqualification etc with the pupil. 1
2. Tracey	Quietly gain the students' attention. Move him away from the group and ask him for an explanation. Ask him how he should be punished and then decide yourself. 0	Linda	Speak to them privately after class and ask them what should be done. 1
3. Jenny	I would have a rule regarding the punishment of cheating and act upon it. 0	Nicole	I would allow the pupil to continue on the paper but make a note in my diary when they cheated. I would then ask the pupil to remain behind after the lesson to discuss what should be done about it. Another way may be to mark the paper and if the answer is wrong, don't let the student know he cheated. This way act as a self lesson to the student. 1
4. Shona	Give him a very severe warning, consider deducting marks and if they were caught again award no marks. 0	Janet	Call the pupil aside. Speak quietly to that person sounding out why they did it. Should they have it, is it fair to others in the class. Give appropriate discipline/reprimand. 0